WILD AND ROMANTIC ARE THE SCENES THE GREAT FALLS AFFORD

THE GUARDIAN SPIRIT OF THE FALLS.

IN ITS FINAL HAVEN.

BOILING SEA OF FOAM AND SPRAY.

Most Picturesque Spot That Washington Can Boast---Reached by a Peaceful Trip Up the Canal Between Banks That Give Views of Changing Beauty---The Perilous Narrow Bridge Over Which Each Must Cross Alone.

By MARIAN LONGFELLOW.

IT HAS been said that Washington is sadly lacking in beautiful suburbs; that Chevy Chase, Cabin John Bridge and one or two other spots are the only summer resorts of any consequence close at hand. To those holding this opinion I suggest they accompany us on a trip up the canal to Great Falls, a place where the natural scenery is grand and the journey to which is full of charm.

A party of forty we start from Washington, having chartered the good ship Excelsior, commanded by Captain Hilton. The boat leaves the foot of Thirty-second Street, down in that quaint and picturesque old portion of Georgetown near the Aqueduct Bridge. Mr. Hall, to whom is due the credit of the inception of the excursion, is in evidence at an early hour and pilots us on board. After all is declared ready we steam up the canal.

As we steam slowly up the canal we pass, on our right, Georgetown College, the Jesuit College, with its fine modern buildings standing out in strong contrast to the old portion which formed the original college. On our left is spread out the beautiful Potomac, and beyond rise the wooded hills of Virginia. The cottage in which Mrs. Emma D. E. N. Southworth wrote is perched on the right bank of the Potomac, overlooking the river's sweep, and is an ideal spot for the poet or romance writer, although the traffic of today is fast crowding in upon that once quiet spot.

Through the Golden Day.

On through the golden day we steam, meeting an occasional canal boat, drawn by its patient tow horse or mule. As we pass on into the beauty and calm of the day, the banks slip by almost imperceptibly, the foliage lending a deeper charm to the scene, while a merry and light-hearted company drink in the pleasure of the day.

Then comes the excitement of going through the first lock, where the perturbation and surprise, followed by the estacy of the uninitiated, is duly appreciated by the veteran in charge. The venerable lockkeeper has a head to delight an artist.

On through the locks we pass till some sixteen of them have been successfully stormed. Some of the passengers leave the boat and walk along the towpath. Willows bend over the water and trail their branches along the surface of the canal; and such a day—cool, crisp, and sparkling; a day of pure and unadulterated enjoyment to be remembered; a scene from which the cares and burdens of life are eliminated.

Rocks Lend a Wilder Tone.

We sweep steadily on until the rocks lend a wilder tone to the scene, and from the towpath on the left may be discerned picturesque boulders scattered in wild confusion and leading down to the river bed some distance below. A false step and one would be plunged many feet below. Here we make a decided turn from the straight and narrow line of the canal.

Upon arriving at one of the locks not far from Great Falls we see an old canal-boat temporarily moored. It lends a charm to the spot and all that is sordid and common is touched by the glamour of time and place.

At last the word goes forth. "'Great Falls' are just ahead!" Luncheon baskets are repacked; those of the party who have remained on the hurricane deck since we left Georgetown come down and mingle with the others; we step ashore. There is but one thought and that is to reach the Falls as soon as possible.

A small boy bars the way to the bridge. He demands "toll" in the shape of 5 cents. His haste appears unseemly. I wonder why the toll should be collected in advance as there is no other way to return. Later on, I understand. The perils of that trip are still fresh in my mind. We reach a swinging bridge which, were we not to recross in safety, would mean the loss of one or more 5-cent pieces to the Great Falls Company. Truly it is not alone to the "Yankee" that an eye to one's interest is given.

A Bridge Each Must Cross Alone.

The bridge is but a narrow planking, much worn. There is a hand-rail of the most primitive type, about the height of one's waist, and between that and the planks there is ample room for the passenger to slip and go through down into the shallow water among the rocks, should a misstep occur. With that laissez allez so conspicuous in the native, this condition of affairs is permitted to continue. The bridge is said to be perfectly safe, but it sways perilously at every step of the passenger and sags ominously when the heavy weights essay passage.

With faith this passage may be undertaken, but what of those who desire something more tangible than faith to support them? The journey is not unlike the crossing of the River Styx in one particular; it must be crossed alone; only one passenger at a time is the rule. When the more substantial passengers of the expedition face the problem of crossing that awful bridge there is a struggle between courage or "nerve" on one side and ignominious flight on the other; but we have not come so many miles to be put to rout at the last moment. We take our courage in one hand, and it is sufficiently small to be so carried, and clutch the handrail despairingly with the other. The wag of the party stands on the further side, after he has passed triumphantly over, and explains to us that "one long step and one short one, alternately, will break the strain on the planks." He is quite serious at last. But, oh, the strain of counting that "one long and one short step." Midway over we spy, to the right, a singular appearance caused by an old stump on a rock, which looks exactly like a huge black bear sitting on his haunches, with back turned to the bridge, and looking down the stream.

Like the Ascent and Descent of Pyramids

After the passage is safely made we find out that our troubles are by no means over. We follow as best we can a winding path which leads through thickets overgrown with rank weeds, over rocks and across old planks thrown across abortive streams; we are hauled up and pushed down places which remind one of the ascent and descent of the Pyramids, until, at last, we come in sight of the falls. Our woes are forgotten; the merry company is awed into silence by the rugged grandeur of the scene. They seat themselves on the rocks and gaze at the scene spread out before them. One of the party stands a tall and silent figure, silhouetted against the evening sky. It is impossible not to recall the incident of some years ago when a merry party like our own visited the Falls and where a misatep cost the life of one of the gayest of the party and brought to a sudden and tragic end the promise of that young man's future.

Boiling Water of the Falls.

The shores across rise, a beautiful background, while over the rocks dashes the boiling water of the falls and rapids. The silvery plumes of spray are thrown high in the air, to be hurled back from those rocks, but the water, like an athlete, wrestles with its foe, only to be thrust back as by the hand of a giant.

From another point we see the sweep of the rapids, for they are more of the character of rapids than falls, and that majestic sweep of water paints upon one's memory a picture whose beauty is not soon to be forgotten. It is akin to the savage beauty which makes Niagara so famous and so awful.

By a strange trick of fancy, the water discloses, midway in the stream, the head of an old man. The spray of the water gives him his snowy hair and beard, and he seems to be the guardian of the place.

The sun is slowly declining, and the hush of evening is in the air; we think of that rugged path by which we came and of that awful bridge that swings and sways as if it longed to hurl us to the water as a prey to the powers of the deep. We gather up baskets, boxes, kodaks, and other traps, and once more our faces are turned toward the canal and home.

Homeward Bound.

When we reach the spot from which we had started for the Falls, we find the Excelsior and her cheery captain awaiting us. The boy who took "toll" is conspicuous by his absence. We step aboard; the chill of evening deepens to the greater chill of nightfall, and the heavy wraps and even furs we scorned to bring with us are objects of genuine regret. The mysteries of twilight descend upon us.

Some of the party decide to tramp down the towpath and we hear their voices die away in the distance; but the majority determine to stay by the ship. We draw closer to each other; the boat creaks and strains, the ropes are cast off, and we are once more afloat. As we sweep down the canal voices are raised in song and the moon rises and adds her glory to the sky; she casts her silver light over the water, touching the trees, deepening the shadows, and transforming the simple houses of the country folk who live along the banks into fairy habitations. The barking of dogs shrill on the air; the sound of the lockkeeper's voice bidding us good-night follows us.

IN A PARADISE OF THE SEA WHERE SLEDDING IS PERENNIAL.

THE POPULAR AND SLOW BUT SURE MODES OF TRAVEL OF THE PEOPLE IN THE FARAWAY ISLAND OF MADEIRA.

WASHINGTONIANS with their swift electric cars, their automobiles, and carriages would find themselves greatly nonplussed were they to be suddenly wafted to that beautiful isle of the sea, Madeira, where the most rapid motive power is man, and the one most generally used the patient and reliable but ever slow ox. Yet it is probable that many cycles will pass before new forms of transit are introduced in that far-away island.

The Madeira group consists of two inhabited islands, Madeira and Porto Santo, and three unhabited rocks, the Desertas. The group has belonged to Portugal since 1420. The distance from Portugal is 535 miles. Madeira is about thirty miles long, its breadth thirteen miles. From west to east runs a central ridge, whose highest peak, "Pico Ruivo," is 6,059 feet. From the central mass steep ridges extend to the coast, where they form perpendicular headlands of dark basalt. Deep ravines penetrate from the coast to the interior.

The roads are in many places exceedingly picturesque, passing between lofty cliffs or along the front of precipices, which run perpendicularly to the sea. The gorges, the rugged peaks, clothed with a remarkably rich verdure, afford many scenes of striking grandeur.

The interior is mostly uninhabited. Towns, villages, and cottages are usually situated on the lower slopes of the mountains, between precipices, and in richly cultivated valleys.

Funchal, the capital, faces the bay and climbs the hillside, which rises immediately from the water's edge. The view from the roadstead is very pretty. The wide, sweeping curve of the bay, the perfect blue of the water, on the surface of which floats shipping of every nationality, the clear atmosphere, the bright town, the air of activity prevailing on the shore, the lofty mountains, covered brilliantly with the perfect green of the forests and vineyards, form a striking scene.

Horses and carriages are seldom seen in Funchal. The roads leading to the outskirts of the city are too steep; transportation is effected either by means of wooden sledges or by hammocks.

The sledges, drawn by a pair of bullocks, are curtained and made to hold four persons. They are quite comfortable as means of transportation, but they are not at all "rapid transit."

The sledges with basket seats are mostly used by persons who have ascended the mountain by rail. A short-distance railroad has been in operation for some years.

The hammocks are made of strong canvas, gathered up and secured at each end to a long pole, carried by two men. Staves four feet long, and having forked tops, are used by the carrier, partly to support themselves while ascending, partly to relieve them for a minute or two from their burden, by placing the poles on the forks.

The roads are well kept, and although they are tremendously steep at some points, they can be traversed quite easily, as they are paved with pebbles, which are arranged in such a way that they offer a secure foothold.

Madeira, with its bracing climate, its exquisite scenery, its luxuriant flora, its forests of magnificent laurel trees, surrounded by the smiling blue of the sea, and with all the good things so abundantly provided by nature for its inhabitants, seems to be the nearest approach to paradise of any earthly spot.

HOW LOTTERIES AIDED IN UPBUILDING THE CAPITAL.

EFFORTS to provide more decent and reputable quarters for the Chief Executive and his corps recalls many interesting facts in the early history of some of the public buildings in Washington.

It was not until 1796 that the tempest-tossed Congress of the thirteen colonies saw the first evidences of the Federal city that excited the mirth of the wits, the forebodings of the timid. The circumference of the city as it now spreads out under the great dome is greatly contracted from the imposing dimensions originally laid out by the engineer, L'Enfant.

Where the superb Patent Office now stretches in marble majesty the poetic Frenchman, inspired by recent events in Paris, had marked the site for a national tabernacle, where national events were to be religiously commemorated, where national obsequies were to be celebrated, and the dead honored by the country were to be buried and their monuments perpetuated—a sort of Pantheon to the glories of the republic. But the Frenchman's hopes and plans were were early nipped, for even in these early days "jobs" and "rings" found their account. He was beset on all sides by venal legislators and self-seeking jobbers, and practically coerced into throwing up his commission in disdain, leaving the city as it stands to be completed by Andrew Ellicott.

In 1872 $500 in gold was offered, without restriction as to calling, to the citizen who should send in the accepted design for the President's house. Five hundred dollars and a lot in the new city or a gold medal were offered for the best design of the Capitol. To a generation that has become familiar with the sums annually appropriated and voted for post-office and custom houses at Lickskillet and Pumpkinsville our forefathers will seem thrifty indeed, embarking upon city building with a grant of $19,200 from the States of Virginia and Maryland. This, however, was supplemented by a national lottery, for which 60,000 tickets were sold and of which 16,720 were to draw prizes, the capital one being a hotel which was to cost $50,000. The price of the ticket was $7, and the prizes ranged from $10 up to the hotel.

Nor need the student of current morals and manners, depressed by the laxity of our times, wholly despond when he reflects that the lottery was made use of not only the building of our National Capitol, but churches, schools, colleges, even Harvard itself, were indebted to the wheel for money to secure their usefulness.

In 1796 the President's house and the Capitol were the only evidences of a city where the traveler now sees squares and monuments, edifices and gardens and parks that eclipse Paris and Vienna in beauty and taste. When the lottery failed, and the sums voted by Virginia and Maryland gave out, Washington was less of a city than Cahaba, down in Alabama, which was once the capital of that State and was sold for taxes. Three hundred thousand dollars were asked by the commissioners to go on with the work, and the country was distracted by such profligate outlay. The press of the time thundered against such extravagance.

WAY TO MAKE MILLIONS OUT OF SKUNKS.

ABOUT two years ago a story went the rounds to the effect that Secretary Wilson of the Agricultural Department was a warm advocate of the establishment of skunk farms, and that he had said that there was more money in the business of raising skunks than in a gold mine. The story had the effect of causing something like 50,000 letters to be sent the Secretary. Recently the attack by letter has been renewed on the Agricultural Department, and some have been received giving an outline of what has and can be accomplished in the business.

One man has figured out that he does not know of any enterprise which will bring in money faster than skunk farming. He says that there are only two species of the American skunk—the jet black and the black and white striped. The latter, he says, is one of the most beautiful in the animal kingdom, but that its breath is far from pleasant and inviting. The jet black skunk is more valuable than his black and white neighbor, his pelts being worth in market at all seasons $1 each, while the others bring only about half that amount. The pelts are used by physicians in cases of croup, colds, and kindred diseases. The oil does not carry with it the awful aroma of the skunk, and has great curative qualities. This man says that one can begin skunk farming on twenty varmints—fifteen females and five males—and in a few years will have a healthy and rapidly-increasing bank account.

He calculates that these twenty skunks will increase in number at a rate which will surprise the most rapid mathematician. They begin to breed at one year old, having two litters a year, and from five to thirteen at a litter. They live on as little as any known animal, except the goat, and there is little expense in raising them, but they never become tame, and he adds that he does not suppose people would ever care to have them for pets. They breed in December and again in June.

Putting the average litter at eight, the twenty skunks will have increased to 7,-160 skunks at the close of the first year and a half. In four years, without some mishap, the skunks have increased in number to 3,780,000. If the pelts are worth $1 each, the pelts of one hundred male skunks would bring $200; the oil at 50 cents an ounce would be $800, and figuring the same as on the increase of the skunks, at the expiration of one and one-half years, 3,700 male skunks could be killed, the pelts of which would be worth just as many dollars. The amount of oil gathered from this number would be 29,-600 ounces, worth just $14,800.

At the expiration of four years you would have killed 1,890,000 males, the pelts of which would be worth $1,890,000, and the oil—15,120,000 ounces—$7,560,000, and still have more than 3,700,000 skunks left.

Some enterprising man now has a fortune if he can evolve some plan for deodorizing the skunk.